

SAN JOAQUIN RIVER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

December 11, 2002
Stanislaus County Agricultural Center
Modesto, California

Welcome and Introductions

The San Joaquin River Management Program Advisory Council met at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center in Modesto, California. There were no comments on the draft minutes of the September 27, 2002 meeting. Draft minutes from the most recent meeting and pertinent documents are posted on the SJRMP website at:

<http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sjd/sjrmpp/index.html>

Debbie North, San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, thanked the group for participating in the survey. There were a total of 40 responses from a broad spectrum of professionals.

Action Team Report

Ernie Taylor, DWR, summarized the last Action Team meeting held on October 15, 2002, in Modesto at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center. Debbie North informed the group of the public poll funded by the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. The poll is to quantify public knowledge and awareness of the San Joaquin River, identify what messages the public will respond to in order to develop a communications strategy. The results of the poll will help communicate San Joaquin River Parkway information to the public and help cooperating organizations and agencies to relay a more consistent message. Ann Chrisney, Riparian Habitat Joint Venture Coordinator, briefed the group on the RHJV to the group. The RHJV released a bird conservation plan based on fourteen riparian-associated bird species selected to serve as indicators of a range of natural riparian habitat conditions. The plan can be downloaded from <http://www.prbo.org/calpif/htmldocs/riparian.html>.

Neutral Forum for Identifying and Resolving Issues on the SJR

Tim Ramirez, Resources Agency, lead a discussion on creating a neutral forum for the SJR. The idea of the forum is to provide an organization where different groups can come together to understand how projects, issues, and stakeholders of the SJR fit together. An example group is the Sacramento River Conservation

Area Forum; they have created an organization to facilitate an open forum on the Sacramento River.

Dennis Prosperi, SJR Task Force, discussed the formation and organizational structure of the SJR Resource Management Coalition and the Task Force. Prosperi explained that these two groups represent tax-based interests and are made up of landowners, water districts, county representatives and other agencies. He said that their meetings are open to the public and that environmental organizations are welcome to attend. Prosperi noted that both groups recognize the need for increased participation from environmental groups and lower SJR stakeholders. He also mentioned that the RMC is currently working on a comprehensive SJR restoration plan under an EPA grant.

Michael Kahoe, SJ Valley Water Coalition, explained that the SJVWC is a large group which focuses on water issues covering several counties in the Valley; including Stanislaus, Merced, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern counties.

Alex Hildebrand, South Delta Water Agency, talked about the need for comprehensive project development on the SJR and briefly discussed the range of different important issues affecting the River. He pointed out changes on the SJR upstream affect the downstream stakeholders. Any forum for the SJR should include representation from all groups that could be affected by operational changes on the river; from upstream of the reservoirs to the Delta. Hildebrand is working with the SJR Flood Control Association to create a "white paper" that will describe all problems and projects on the river and the organizations that are directly affected. The paper will encourage these groups to gather together to discuss these issues. Hildebrand believes that the SJRMP can be a coordinating forum for these discussions.

Ramirez mentioned that participation in SJRMP does change depending on the focus of each meeting. If the material in the agenda does not relate to a group they likely will not attend, however he believes SJRMP is reaching those that are interested.

Mike McElhiney, NRCS, agreed that the SJR watershed needs a forum. He would like to see SJRMP be more open with invitations to the meetings and expand the mailing list to include more groups beyond the Stanislaus County line. Landis pointed out that SJRMP does want to reach out to groups that wish to discuss issues or projects related to the SJR, and any such group could be put on the agenda of a future meeting at their request.

Steve Ottemoeller, Madera I.D., asked what organizational changes SJRMP would have to undergo to become this neutral forum.

Landis expressed the need to keep a broad focus for SJRMP and retain the 6 components to the original Plan; flood protection, water supply, water quality,

recreation, fisheries, and wildlife. The group as a whole agreed that future meetings should be held within the watershed and some further suggested meetings covering localized issues should be held near those locations.

Jared Huffman, Natural Resource Defense Council, stressed the need for a neutral forum that could address the concerns of all interest groups. The group discussed who the RMC, Task Force and the SJV Water Coalition represented and the limitations of representation of these groups.

The group agreed that links to the RMC and other local organizations should be placed on the SJRMP web site. SJRMP is requesting contact information for organizations and groups that are not currently on the mailing list that have an interest in the San Joaquin Valley. The individuals will receive SJRMP information and an invitation to meetings.

San Joaquin River Group Authority Water Quality Program

Lowell Ploss, San Joaquin River Group Authority, explained that one goal of the Authority is to investigate water quality issues on the San Joaquin River and develop solutions. The Regional Water Quality Control Board 2-year agriculture waiver was recently passed to establish a watershed coalition to respond to water quality issues at the watershed level. Additional water quality monitoring will be necessary to address the various water quality problems on the Lower San Joaquin River. Landowners will have the choice of participating in water quality monitoring and improvement programs on a watershed level or on an individual basis. The watershed approach can be used to identify and address “hot spots” by working directly with individual landowners or encouraging individuals to work together to find solutions.

The Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan is an example of a watershed-based program focused on improving flow and a water quality objectives on the San Joaquin River. An oversight committee made up of management and technical groups guides the VAMP. The technical group creates annual reports of the water quality at Vernalis and oversees how programs are implemented on the San Joaquin River. Examples of programs include: real-time monitoring, outreach and education, and water quality tracking system. The management group coordinates between various local and government agencies. The Group Authority proposed to CALFED to catalog all the water quality efforts that have taken place and are currently active on the San Joaquin River. The proposal was not approved.

In addition, Ploss discussed the deep water ship channel dissolved oxygen issues on the San Joaquin River. The Authority has worked with the TMDL group over the past three years on dynamic modeling of the channel. One of the possible solutions is to aerate the channel. CALFED is seeking cost estimates to determine the feasibility of an aeration system in the deep water ship channel.

The group would like to construct a demonstration system to determine if the solution will be effective.

Ecological Flow Study for the San Joaquin River and Tributaries

John Cain and Sarah Beamish, Natural Heritage Institute, discussed the progress of the ecological flow study for the San Joaquin River and Tributaries. The proposal started three years ago and was funded by CALFED. The goal of the study is to restore the hydrologic and geomorphic processes of the SJR without affecting historical flow diversion patterns and water supplies. Since Friant Dam was constructed, the variability and the magnitude of flows on the SJR have been significantly truncated. Some of the defined tasks include determining a flow regime and the variation in reservoir releases needed to restore a more natural hydrologic patterning. They began by analyzing the salmonid migration pattern and comparing it to historical flows. They are proposing that the right timing, frequency, magnitude, and duration of reservoir releases can assist in restoring the variability in the river hydrograph. Variations in the hydrograph provide native diversity and encourage species variability along the floodway.

The Institute created an Excel based model in an effort to determine if there are ways to re-operate reservoir releases to mirror pre-dam flows. Input variables to the daily time step model include reservoir storage and releases, downstream diversions and flows, travel times, and seepage losses. By changing these factors, the impact of various release scenarios on restoration efforts can be evaluated. The Institute's modeling effort has determined that mobilization of SJR streambed material begins at 16,000 cubic feet per second. The mobilization of bed material is a very important part of the geomorphic process that helps create spawning habitat for migrating salmon. The model will also be used to optimize the timing of release flows to create better forecasting rules for operation of the reservoirs.

One comment concerned creating a more natural flow regime may also cause flooding downstream. Cain acknowledged that this is a possibility and would place restraints on the restoration process. At this point, this is a theoretical study to provide information for future efforts.

Orestimba Creek – Flood Control Reduction and Ecosystem Restoration

Jacob McQuirk and Karen Enstrom, DWR, presented the current activities for the Orestimba Creek flood control reduction and ecosystem restoration project. Orestimba Creek is a flashy, highly degraded west-side stream with very limited riparian area. The primary objectives of the Orestimba flood control project are to reduce flood damage to the City of Newman and restore the ecosystem in the watershed. Secondary objectives include groundwater recharge and recreation. Several alternatives for flood control have been analyzed. The alternatives

include: bypass channel, upstream floodwater attenuation basin, downstream floodwater attenuation basin, chevron levee, and setback levee. The bypass channel has already been ruled cost prohibitive. The City of Newman did not want the chevron levee because it only protected the City and not the agriculture in the area in which the city economy depends. The upstream attenuation basin was dropped because of the impact on the wildlife in the watershed. There have been public workshops and meetings.

The preferred alternative is the downstream floodwater attenuation basin. They are currently working on a gross appraisal and environmental study to estimate the costs of the downstream basin. A gravel mining operation was located on Orestimba Creek and is the ideal location for the downstream attenuation basin and restoration. The set-back levees are still being analyzed but may not be feasible because of land costs and homes that are located along the creek.

Statewide Floodplain Management Task Force

Sergio Guillen, DWR, informed the group of the current status of the Statewide Floodplain Management Task Force recommendations. The Task Force was charged with writing recommendations for policy changes to the government concerning floodplain management. California's population growth and ecosystem degradation sparked the debate. Over 50 professionals worked on the recommendations on a consensus basis. Contributors attended more than 35 work group meetings to craft recommendations. The final report was going to be approved December 12, 2002. A few of the recommendations were going to be reviewed before final approval.

Other Business

McElhiney announced that the 2002 farm bill is being presented at a series of forums throughout the state. There is up to \$450,000 cost share for water and air quality projects to encourage individuals to enter into voluntary programs.

The next RMC Task Force meeting will be held on January 8.

**ATTENDEES AT
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING AND ACTION TEAM MEETING
December 11, 2002**

No.	Name	Organization	Phone	E-mail
1	Shakoora Azimi	CVRWQCB	(916) 255-3092	azimis@rb5s.swrcb.ca.gov
2	Sarah Beamish	NHI	(510) 644-2900 x 113	sarahb@n-h-i.org
3	Steve Burke	Protect Our Water	(209) 523-1391	sburke@ainet.com
4	Roger Buttermore	OSFWS (CALFED invasive species)	(209) 946-6400 x 337	roger_buttermore@fws.gov
5	John Cain	NHI	(510) 644-2900 x 108	jcain@n-h-i.org
6	Tony Cusenza	Rec. Board		
7	Jerry Davis	Turlock Mosquito Abatement Dist.	(209) 634-8331	mosquito@cwnet.com
8	Douglas DeFlitch	FWUA	(559) 562-6305	ddeflitch@fwua.org
9	Karen Enstrom	DWR	(916) 574-0372	kenstrom@water.ca.gov
10	Fraser Gensler	Corps of Engrs Comp Study	(916) 557-6881	Fraser.F.Gensler@usace.army.mil
11	Eric Gillies	State Lands	(916) 574-1897	gilliee@slc.ca.gov
12	Russ Grimes	SKS	(916) 329-9199	grimes@skswater.com
13	Sergio Guillen	DWR	(916) 651-8137	sguillen@water.ca.gov
14	Karna Harrigfeld	SEWD	(209) 472-7700	kharrigfeld@herumcrabtree.com
15	Ron Harris	MWOC	(559) 665-5992	ronandjudi38@earthlink.net
16	Alex Hildebrand	SDWA	(209) 823-4166	hildfarm@gte.net
17	Reggie Hill	LSJLD	(209) 387-4545	sjrlevee@dospalos.org
18	Randy Hour	SJRECWA CCC	(559) 659-2426	columbia@thegrid.wet
19	Jared Huffman	NRDC	(415) 777-0220	jhuffman@nrdc.org
20	Michael Kalue	SJV Water Coalition	(916) 682-0258	m.kalue@attbi.com
21	Jim Koontz	Turlock Irrigation Dist.	(209) 667-5501	jkoontz@calwaterlaw.com

22	Paula	Landis	DWR	(559) 230-3310	plandis@water.ca.gov
23	Jennifer	Martin	Nature Conservancy	(415) 281-0469	jmartin@tnc.org
24	Mike	McElhiney	NRCS	(209) 491-9320 ext. 102	michael.mcelhiney@ca.usda.gov
25	Orvil	McKinnis	Westlands Water Dist	(559) 241-6242	omckinnis@westlandswater.org
26	Jeff	McLain	USFWS	(209) 946-6400 x 304	jeff_mclain@fws.gov
27	Jacob	McQuirk	DWR	(916) 574-0360	jacobmc@water.ca.gov
28	Teri	Murrison	EMRCD	(209) 852-0112	tmurriso@inreach.com
29	Deborah	North	SJRPCT	(530) 574-3025	dnorth@riverparkway.org
30	Stephen	Ottemoeller	Madera ID	(559) 673-3514	offemueller@attitude.com
31	Amanda	Peisch	DWR	(559) 230-3307	apeisch@water.ca.gov
32	Lowell	Ploss	SJRGGA	(916) 449-3957	lowellploss@aol.com
33	Denis	Prosperi	SJR Taskforce	(559) 673-3921	denisprosperi@psnw.com
34	Pete	Rabbon	Rec Board	(916) 653-5434	
35	Tim	Ramirez	Resources Agency	(916) 653-5672	tim@resources.ca.gov
36	Mario	Santoyo	FWUA	(559) 799-0701	msantoyo@fwuz.org
37	Bernice	Sullivan	FWUA	(916) 441-1931	bsullivan@fwua.org
38	Lynn	Skinner	RMC	(209) 392-2543	dlskinner6@aol.com
39	Ernie	Taylor	DWR	(559) 230-3352	etaylor@water.ca.gov
40	JD	Wikert	USFWS	(209) 946-6400 x 307	john_wikert@r1.fws.gov
41	Carolyn	Yale	USEPA	(415) 972-3482 x 307	yale.carolyn@epa.gov